

3/2/09 - Monday, March 2, 2009

**CITY OF EAU CLAIRE
PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES**

Meeting of March 2, 2009

City Hall, Council Chambers

7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Messrs. Duax, FitzGerald, Kaiser, Kayser, Larson, Pearson, Seymour, Waedt

Staff Present: Messrs. Genskow, Ivory, Noel, Tufte

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Kaiser.

1. REZONING (Z-1439-09) “ Poster Panel Sign Code Amendment

Pat Ivory presented a revised ordinance request from Lamar Advertising to amend the Sign Code Chapter, 16.18. Poster Panel. The amendment would permit structural changes to be made to nonconforming billboards and enable the replacement of the sign face portions of the sign structure. Specifically, the ordinance states that at least one nonconforming poster panel sign shall be removed for 9 or fewer nonconforming poster sign faces that are replaced per site plan application; [and] the entire poster panel sign structure must be removed with the elimination of the sign face. The site plan review process gives the commission the direction as to which nonconforming billboards should be removed based on multiple nonconformities and whether the sign is located in special sign districts. Mr. Ivory also explained the City has four lease agreements with nonconforming billboards. These lease end dates vary, but the last one terminates in 2012. The City has the option to give 60-day notice that it is going to terminate the lease(s) if it so chooses.

Applicants, Rich Reinart and Bill Mitchell of Lamar Advertising, were in favor of the proposed ordinance and stated they will submit a site plan that has their 48 sign retrofits. They also stated the structural I-beams supporting the sign will last longer than the new sign faces.

There was commissioner discussion over the ratio for removing nonconforming billboards when retrofit sign face changes are proposed. Some felt the draft ordinance allows too many to remain, while others felt the ordinance represents the work and compromising efforts thus far achieved between the applicant and the City. The commission also wanted the City Attorney to review the proposed ordinance organization.

Mr. Larson moved to amend the proposed ordinance recommending for one sign retrofit one nonconforming billboard must be removed. Mr. Duax seconded but the motion failed due to lack of support from other commissioners.

Mr. Duax moved to amend the proposed ordinance recommending for five sign retrofits one nonconforming billboard must be removed. Mr. Larson seconded but the motion failed due to lack of support from Messrs. Waedt, FitzGerald, Kaiser, and Pearson.

Mr. FitzGerald moved to recommend approval of the proposed amendment. Mr. Waedt seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Duax, Mr. Kasyer, and Mr. Larson voted nay.

2. GENERAL SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PZ-0902) “ Hobbs Arena Addition

Darryl Tufte presented a request from the City to approve a site plan for an addition to Hobbs Ice Arena. The project is located at 10th Avenue and Menomonie Street. The construction project encloses the existing outdoor ice rink, adds a two-story addition, and has parking lot improvements. Since the project will not add any more seating to the current capacity, there is no need for more parking. The project is not in the floodplain. Landscaping and screening will be provided for the site, dumpster, and parking. Mr. Tufte stated the City Council review of the project will be on March 24 instead of their March 10 meeting.

Mr. Duax had concerns about parking during major events. Phil Fieber, Parks and Recreation Director, stated additional off-site parking for major events might be solved by setting up parking agreements with Student Transit and the church adjacent to the site.

Mr. FitzGerald moved to recommend approval of the site plan, along with the conditions of the staff report. Mr. Kasyer seconded and the motion carried.

3. DISCUSSION/DIRECTION

A. Exterior Lighting

Ned Noel presented the staff report regarding two options for regulation of exterior lighting. The first used existing electrical codes as the standard, which reduce power consumption from previous codes and indirectly limits lighting levels by confining the amount of power to square foot dimensions of the area or activity to be lit. Staff would also create standards to limit off-site light spill, shield fixtures, and deal with nonconforming situations. The second option used a Lumen per Acre standard. Different zoning districts in the City would be established in this case and tied to light zones that would limit the amount of total lighting. For example, the downtown area would allow more lumens per acre than fringe residential areas. To verify compliance, photometric plans would need to be submitted. Mr. Noel noted staff prefers the first option because Building Inspections already enforce the wattage per square foot standards, the electrical code stays more current with technological advancements, and the development community is already familiar with using this standard.

Commissioners discussed safety concerns with using the wattage standard. Mr. Noel stated lighting technology has so rapidly improved that lumen output is more efficient for the amount of watts input. Thus, a decrease in wattage does not necessarily mean a decrease in light output. Commissioners decided the best approach would be put together an ordinance that uses the wattage per square foot standard.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2009, were approved.

Fred Waedt
Secretary